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ABSTRACT

The foundation for the word attack element of the Wisconsin Design for Reading Skill Development consists of the Outline of Reading Skills and related behavioral objectives. The list of word attack skills was originally drawn from a prepared curriculum guide of a public school system and subsequently refined. The skills are the ones commonly taught in elementary schools and considered essential to reading development. The remaining components of the Design are keyed to the specific skills listed in the outline. Behavioral objectives were written for each skill at mid-level of specificity to define the tasks that the child must be able to perform in order to demonstrate skill mastery. Each skill is assessed by a criterion-referenced test; no group-referent norms exist. A criterion of 80 percent correct is set in recognition of measurement limitations and variables. The assessment instruments are the informal guides to individual skill observation and the formal Wisconsin Tests of Reading Skill Development. Each test consists of approximately 15 to 20 items and has a reliability of .80 or higher. The pupil Profile Card is the primary vehicle for pupil accounting with the Design. Available materials for each skill are listed in the Teacher's Resource File. School personnel are encouraged to add useful materials and activities to the files. References are included. (Author/AW)

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The Word Attack Element of the Design*

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The Word Attack element of the Wisconsin Design was the first to be completed. The formal field test of Word Attack began during the 1970-71 school year and was continued during 1971-72. Therefore, a discussion of the Word Attack components will reveal what also exists in the Study Skills element and what is planned for Comprehension.

* This is the second paper in a symposium---A Skill Centered Approach to Reading Instruction: The Wisconsin Design for Reading Skill Development--- at the 1971 annual meeting of the National Reading Conference, Tampa, Florida.

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Skills and Objectives

The foundation for the Word Attack element consists of the Outline of Reading Skills and related behavioral objectives. [The list of essential reading skills and the related objectives for Word Attack may be found elsewhere (Otto and Askov, 1970).]

The list of Word Attack skills was originally drawn from a carefully prepared curriculum guide of a public school system. The list has subsequently been refined in view of feedback from teachers and reading specialists who have worked with the list in the field, extensive reviews of the related literature and instructional materials, the opinions of authoritative reviewers, and experience in pilot situations. The skills, then, are the ones commonly taught in the elementary school and considered to be essential to reading development. The remaining components of the Design--the assessment exercises, the pupil accounting system, and the aids to instruction--are keyed to the specific Word Attack skills listed in the Outline.

Behavioral objectives were written for each Work Attack skill. The objectives were written at a mid-level of specificity, corresponding to Krathwohl's second level (1965). In other words, they fall between general program objectives at the most abstract level and specific objectives for instructional materials. The purpose of the behavioral objectives of the Design, then, is to define the tasks that the child must be able to perform in order to demonstrate skill mastery. Therefore, the objectives are specific enough to define the tasks but general enough to give the teacher considerable flexibility in designing an instructional program.

Assessment

Each skill in Word Attack is assessed by a criterion-referenced test. In other words, performance on a test is judged by the extent to which the criterion behaviors are exhibited. The behavioral objectives for the skill define the criterion behaviors, and the criterion-referenced test assesses the ability of the child to perform the tasks called for in the objectives. Since each child is evaluated only in terms of his ability to perform the criterion behaviors, no group-referent norms (e.g., percentile, stanine) exist. Ideally, a pupil would be expected to respond correctly to all of the items on any given test. In recognition of measurement limitations and situational variables, however, a criterion of 80% correct is frequently set.

Two types of assessment instruments exist. One type consists of informal guides to individual skill observation. They are intended to assist teachers in observing specific, skill-related behaviors in individuals and to serve as models for the development of additional exercises.

The other type of assessment is the formal Wisconsin Tests of Reading Skill Development. A paper-and-pencil test exists for most skills in Word Attack. (For the few skills that are not amenable to written assessment individually administered performance inventories are provided.) Each test consists of approximately 15-20 items. Time limits are not imposed and examiners are encouraged to respond to questions regarding directions and unknown words in the tests. Each test has demonstrated reliability at a reasonably high level, usually having reliability coefficients of .80 or better.

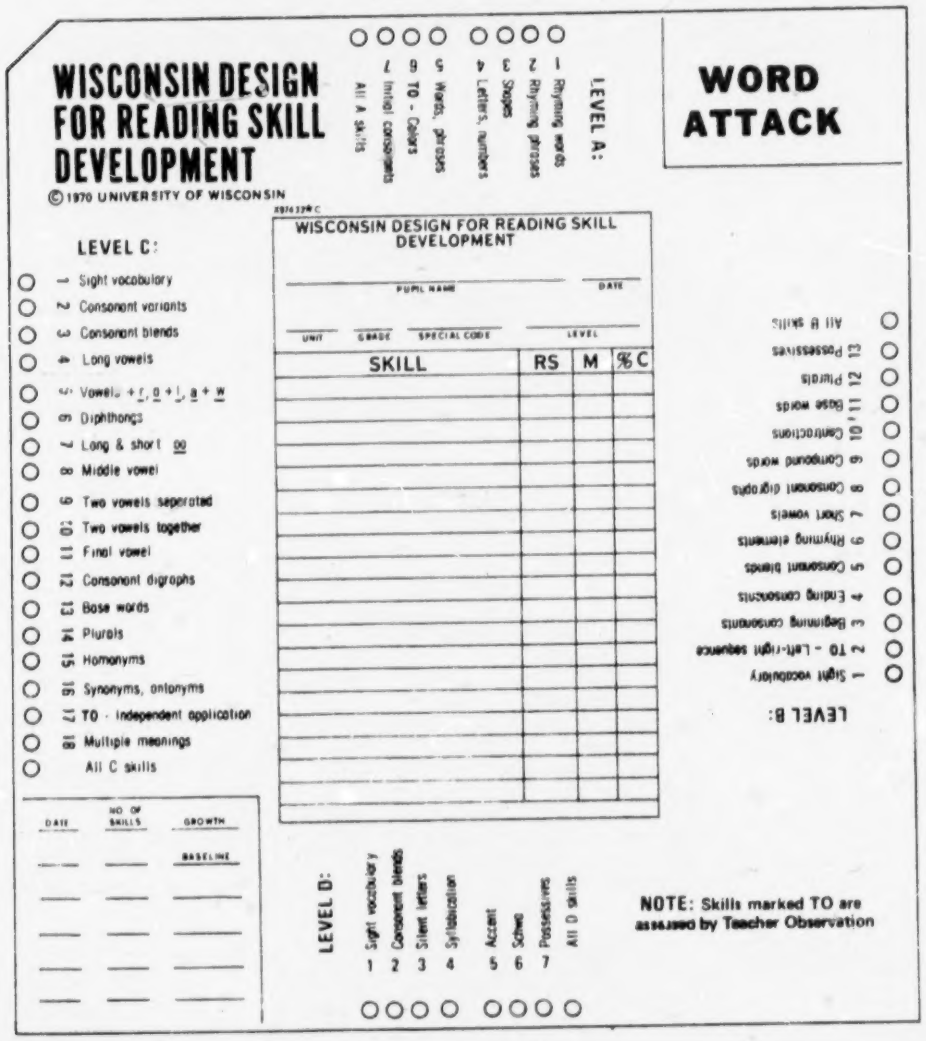
Management

To bridge the gap between assessment and instruction, a management system is provided. Some means of systematic record-keeping is essential if the results from assessment are to be applied in instruction. The Pupil Profile Card is the primary vehicle for pupil accounting with the Design. (See Figure 1 for an example of the card for Word Attack.)

All of the Word Attack skills are listed on the card. When there is evidence of mastery for a given skill, the hole at the edge of the card next to the skill name is "notched." Thus, a pupil's skill development record amounts to "closed" holes for skills that need development and notched or "open" holes for skills that have been developed. To identify pupils with common skill development needs, the teacher selects a given

Figure 1

Individual Card for Card-Sorting Scheme



skill, passes a skewer through the appropriate hole in a stack of cards, and shakes off the loose cards. The cards that remain on the skewer belong to pupils who need to work on the skill.

To assist with the mechanics of individual record keeping when test booklets are machine scored, a summary of test results is provided as a part of the scoring service. The summary, which indicates what skills have been mastered, is printed on a gummed label that can be affixed to the center of a Pupil Profile Card.

Instruction

Although plentiful and adequate instructional materials exist for teaching Word Attack skills, rarely are they systematically organized according to skills. Therefore, the Teacher's Resource Files - Word Attack list available instructional materials for each skill in the Outline of Reading Skills. A separate folder is thus provided for each skill. Page numbers in appropriate commercial materials for teaching a given skill are listed on the folder, and suggestions for teacher-directed activities and procedures are printed on sheets of paper which can be inserted inside the folder. Since not all material for teaching a skill could be included, the personnel in each school building are therefore encouraged to add to the files the kinds of materials and activities they find most useful.

A Final Word

Although undoubtedly some modifications in the Wisconsin Design materials would have to be made if they were used with adults, there is no reason to believe that the scope and sequence statement of essential skills for beginning adult readers would be different. Suggestions for use of the Wisconsin Design in Adult Basic Education programs may be found elsewhere (Askov, Otto, and Fischbach, 1970).

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